
Foreign Military Sales Construction in Iraq

By

Major Jared L. Ware, USA

**Program Manager, Foreign Military Sales Construction,
J7 Engineering Directorate, Multi-National Security Transition Command-Iraq**

One of the most robust and diverse foreign military sales (FMS) construction programs in the world is underway in Iraq. The cumulative \$1.03 billion program, managed by the Multi-National Security Transition Command-Iraq (MNSTC-I), provides engineering services and construction to Iraq's Ministry of Defense (MOD) and Ministry of Interior (MOI). The MNSTC-I J7 (military speak for engineering arm) Engineering Directorate works with various stakeholders from the Iraqi ministries, the Security Assistance Office, coalition advisors, and implementing agencies to develop projects from "cradle to grave" in support of Iraq's rapidly expanding security force construction requirements. Thus far, the FMS program has completed eight cases valued at \$140.5 million, with one case in progress for the design and construction of a pier and seawall complex at the port city of Umm Qasr for the Iraqi Navy, a project valued at approximately \$50 million. From a program initially implemented at the request of the Ministry of Defense, the FMS program has now grown to support the Ministry of Interior with three new cases valued at approximately \$200.0 million in engineering design and construction requirements. The FMS program in Iraq has steadily developed into a formalized program that differs from all other FMS programs around the world by the fact that it occurs in a combat environment. The operational environment has posed a number of challenges that require specialized planning and innovative solutions to meet the diverse engineering requirements of the program's unique portfolio.

Program

The FMS Construction Program began in late 2007 with the signing of several cases in support of Iraqi Army force generation requirements linked to what has now become known as "The Surge Strategy." Iraq invested approximately \$300.0 million in military infrastructure for projects throughout the country. To date, nine projects have been awarded; and nine projects are currently in the pre-award stages. Unlike most foreign military sales programs around the world, the Security Assistance Office in Iraq resides within an operational military command and reports directly to a commanding General. Also, the current implementing agency, the United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), has a major subordinate command, Gulf Region Division, under an operational military commander. This ensures that all military construction is tied to an operational need and that it meets the intent of the overall joint campaign plan. The MNSTC-I J7 Engineering Directorate provides engineering support to the process as well as a program management function to link the Security Assistance Office and the implementing agencies to the engineers within the respective Iraqi ministries. Because of the various stakeholders and customers involved in the process, the MNSTC-I J7 has become the central repository for engineering program management and serves as a conduit of information to facilitate the FMS construction program.

Projects

The FMS Program in Iraq has a number of design-build projects for both the MOD and the MOI. The MOD projects include a \$59.0 million Iraqi Army Brigade Complex constructed in Shaiba, which to date is the largest FMS project completed in Iraq. Other projects include the

construction of a field hospital and five field mortuary sites valued at \$5.6 million. The current “flagship” construction project for the FMS program is the pier and seawall complex in Umm Qasr. This project for the Iraqi Navy will be completed in the fall of 2009 and will constitute Iraq’s major operational military seaport. Cases in the pre-award stage for the MOD include additional Army facilities in the Al Anbar Province as well as both Army and Air Force facilities in the Salah Ad Din Province. The MOI projects in the pre-award stage include a \$181.0 million project to construct border roads in support of Iraqi border security and the construction of a \$14.0 million counterterrorism headquarters facility within the greater Baghdad area. There are a number of projects in the developmental stage that will support border facilities upgrades, combat vehicle maintenance facilities, and naval communications towers. The ability to address these diverse engineering projects has improved the trust and cooperation between the stakeholders and has led to a \$200.0 million increase in Iraq’s FMS construction program in 2009.



Figure 1
Developing the Border Road Project in Al Anbar Province, Iraq

Assessment

A number of obstacles were encountered with the FMS construction program that required immediate attention. First, site assessments were initially problematic due to limited movement resources and the ever-changing security environment. In some cases, a thorough site assessment was never conducted, which led to issues in the pre-award stage of the project. In most countries, conducting a site assessment is as easy as jumping into a truck and driving to the proposed construction site. In Iraq, movement takes days of planning and coordination with various military staffs, contract engineers, and the Iraqi military and police. To mitigate the issues with site assessments and movement, all new FMS cases use the United States Corps of Engineer Reconnaissance Liaison Teams (RLTs). The RLTs are contracted security details with skills in basic site assessments and security analysis. The teams work with the MNSTC-I J7 and the Gulf Region USACE FMS Coordinator for the basic engineering requirements for a proposed site. The RLTs take measurements and photos of the area and write a detailed report on the route to the site, as well as gain an appreciation of the local atmospherics of the immediate region. After this report, the FMS team conducts a follow-on engineering assessment to prepare a detailed statement of work.



Figure 2
Partnering to Conduct the Engineering Site Assessment, Tikrit, Iraq

Letter of Request

Another challenging aspect of FMS construction was the initial Letter of Request (LOR) from the government of Iraq to the Security Assistance Office. The LOR is a formal request for FMS services from a foreign government to the United States. The request is usually a one-page document that outlines the basic requirements of the proposed construction project. Some of the existing LORs were developed in the same fashion as LORs for FMS equipment cases, which in turn led to issues with bidding the final contract. To mitigate this shortcoming, MNSTC-I J7 dedicated an engineer officer to work exclusively with Iraq's engineers and the Security Assistance Office in the development of all new LORs, as well as any amendments to existing LORs. This ensured that all requested engineering services and construction would be achievable upon final contracting, and it also implemented the "cradle-to-grave" engineering process to ensure a quality deliverable. Overall, this change in the FMS construction process has led to better stakeholder and customer buy-in, eliminated unnecessary engineering requirements, and ensured that critical requirements were addressed early in the preliminary design phase of the project.

Timeline

The FMS timeline is not advantageous to a contingency construction environment and required an extensive review to determine areas where efficiencies could be gained. Normally, once the LOR is signed by the host nation and forwarded to the Security Assistance Office, it takes approximately 90 days to develop a Letter of Offer and Acceptance (LOA) for final signature by the host nation. In a combat environment, time is of the essence; and many construction priorities can be adjusted during that time frame. After the LOA is signed and sent to the construction implementing agency, the implementing agency has 120 days to develop a design and propose it to the host nation. In a non-combat, steady-state environment, that is usually not a problem; but in Iraq it has posed a significant challenge. To reduce the "wait time" in the request chain, MNSTC-I and USACE developed and instituted a Program Management Policy (PgMP) to allow for parallel and concurrent

effort with respect to site assessments and design. The policy allowed for the use of pre-existing designs to be proposed to the Iraqis, which if approved, could be site adapted as required. Also, during the 90-day wait period for the LOR-to-LOA development, the FMS Coordinator in Iraq worked concurrently with USACE to update any site assessment or engineering information that would benefit the LOA development. In practice, the 90-day period was used to complete the initial site assessment, the engineering assessment, and a detailed statement of requirements. This ensured that the LOA would be properly developed and that Iraq would not have any “sticker shock” or unacceptable terms that might further delay the final LOA approval when presented to a respective ministry for signature.



Figure 3
Finalizing the Requirements On-Site with the End-Users

Future Initiatives

The FMS program’s implementing agency, initially the Air Force Center for Engineering and the Environment, has now fully transitioned to USACE. USACE, as a major subordinate command in theater, has a plethora of engineering support services to better enable the FMS program. USACE has provided a full-time FMS Liaison Office to MNSTC-I J7 and the Security Assistance Office to better support the FMS program. This liaison office will improve the “cradle-to-grave” engineering support that MNSTC-I is entrusted to provide for all FMS projects. USACE, in concert with MNSTC-I, is developing a training program to improve the basic engineering assessment skills of its RLTs. The goal is to have the USACE RLTs qualified to conduct quality assurance to USACE standards for all project sites such as the border roads. This objective is to reduce movement requirements as well as improve the delivery timeline of future projects. Finally, all projects will include an on-site Iraqi engineer from either the MOD or MOI, depending on the project sponsor. This will facilitate better communication flow to the ministries as well as improve local engineering capacity. With these proposed initiatives, the robust and diverse FMS construction program will continue to provide quality construction to our Iraqi partners and improve the country’s overall security posture.

About the Author

Major Jared Ware is currently the Program Manager for Foreign Military Sales Construction, J7 Engineering Directorate, Multi-National Security Transition Command–Iraq. He is an active duty Army engineering officer who has served in a variety of assignments both inside and outside the continental U.S. He is a graduate of the United States Military Academy and has earned graduate degrees in Engineering Management from Missouri University of Science and Technology in Rolla, Missouri and in Defense Geospatial Information from Cranfield University, Shrivenham, England.